



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

STATE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE WHO SOLD VISAS OUT OF EMBASSY WAS SENTENCED FOR FRAUD

MIAMI – A State Department employee who pleaded guilty to her role in illegally providing United States visas to Colombians was sentenced Thursday to 366 days in prison, two years supervised release and 200 hours of community service.

Julieta Quiroz, who worked at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, was also ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Marcia G. Cooke to pay a special assessment of \$300.

The sentencing was jointly announced by U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida Marcos Daniel Jiménez, Special Agent-in-Charge Edgar Moreno of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent-in-Charge Jesus Torres.

"The 9/11 Commission pointed out that vulnerabilities to the immigration system need to be shut down and here we've got a case where these individuals were selling U.S. visas," said Torres. "Reasons like this are exactly why the Department of Homeland Security and ICE were created. This person's actions were unconscionable and we're glad we were able to work with our State Department partners and the U.S. Attorney to close the vulnerability they were exploiting."

Quiroz pleaded guilty Oct. 14 to a three count indictment that charged her with conspiracy to defraud the United States, false issue of visas, permits, and other entry documents, and bribery of public officials, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371, 1546, and 201, respectively.

Quiroz was a consular associate at the embassy at the time, but no longer is employed with the State Department. From July 2000 until July 2002, Quiroz, Olga Ramirez, and Juan Carlos Ramirez committed violations related to the issuance of visas at the embassy. Approximately 180 visas were improperly issued by Quiroz to Colombian citizens who were not authorized to receive visas to enter the United States and used those visas to enter the country.

Quiroz and her co-conspirators assisted the Colombian nationals in obtaining visas to enter the United States by circumventing the United States Department of State's ordinary process for evaluation of visa applications. The Colombian nationals would travel to the embassy in Mexico City, or mail documents to that embassy, and apply for the non-immigrant visas. Quiroz then would issue the visas illegally. Quiroz and her co-conspirators collected thousands of dollars from the Colombian nationals in exchange for the fraudulent visas.

Olga Ramirez pleaded guilty to an information charging her with visa fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1546. Her sentencing hearing is scheduled for March 21 before U.S. District Court Judge Kenneth A. Marra.

Juan Carlos Ramirez is currently a fugitive.

Jiménez said, "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to combat fraudulent activity such as this that threatens our borders and national security."

"While such illegal actions by State Department employees are infrequent occurrences, we are committed to investigating and punishing any Department of State employees who uses his or her position to break the law," said Ambassador Frank Taylor, assistant secretary for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. "With the assistance of the Bureau of Consular Affairs and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, we have been successful in bringing to justice individuals who engaged in a visa fraud scheme that weakens the integrity of our visa system and endangers our security."

Jiménez commended the investigative efforts of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Larry Bardfeld.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.